

Connect 4

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Summary: The story of Connect 4

## Connect 4

### Connect's Story

> <br> "I want out."

> The gang leader looked at Connect, short for Connection, in surprise. "Whaddya mean?" he smirked.<br> The tiny girl repeated herself. "I want out."

> Tom rose from his seat where he had been discussing their next theft. He towered over the girl who was only five feet tall, but full of spunk and attitude. "Why?"<br> Her green eyes flashed. "I don' wanna do dis no more. It ain't fer me. It was fun but now it ain't. All it is now is get it an' go. Da bulls are always on our tails and pretty soon, dey'se gonna catch youse. An' I ain't gonna be heah when dat happens."

> Tom chuckled as did Shark, his right hand man. The girl stood there, unfazed. "Why should I letcha out? We need you. Yer da one who sets everyt'in up. You're our Connection," he said, with an emphasis on her name. She glared at him, completely fearless. <br> "Yeah, well get someone else. I ain't doin' it no more," she muttered, glaring at him. He smirked.

> "Is dat so?" he asked, trying to seem threatening to her. She nodded, defiant. He looked at her and realized that she really did want to go. He sat down, not used to this kind of news as his mind raced through time. Aftah all I done fer her, dis is how she repays me? He thought back to that first day when he had met her. <br>

> They had been getting started, doing things like pickpocketing and home burglaries, but they were already notorious. The Fourth Street Gang they were called, residing in the basement of a house on fourth street at the time. Most of their jobs took place around there. It was one foggy night, and Tom was climbing out of a basement window. Shark had the bag filled with valuables and was waiting for Tom. Time was running short and any minute now, the family would wake up.<br> Tom deftly pulled himself out and was getting ready to run when he saw a little girl who couldn't have been more than five. She had seen

the whole thing.

> Tom cursed himself under his breath. He made his way over to the girl who stood there, silent. Usually, most people felt threatened by him. But not her. She had no fear. "Don't tell anyone what ya just saw," he hissed. "Just go home to yer muddah and faddah."<br> The girl did not move. Tom was about to walk off when he noticed her still standing there. With any other kid, he would have left. But for some reason, he couldn't leave this one. Shark pulled his shirt sleeve, to get him to leave, but Tom shrugged him off. "Whattah mattah? You don't have no muddah and faddah?"

> She shook her head no and he groaned. He wanted to go but something held him back. He started walking away, trying to forget the kid, when he suddenly turned around. "D'ya wanna come wit us?" he asked.<br> Shark looked at him in surprise, then hissed, "Whattah ya doin'?!"

> "Don't worry 'bout it." He turned back to the girl. "Well?"<br> She shrugged and walked up to him. He looked at her in amazement-she was so small, but she wasn't afraid of him. The wheels started turning in his head-she would make a good distractor, and help him get the job done.

> "Take me hand an' pretend yer me sistah," he whispered to her. She shrugged and took his hand. Tom led the three out of the narrow alley, where an officer on duty stood. <br> "May I ask what you're doing here?" the officer asked.

> "Well, see, this is me sistah, Amanda and dis is me bruddah John. 'Manda ran away and our parents were worried to death 'bout her. So me an' John went out ta look fer her and she was in dat alley dere, cryin', so we found her and now we'se takin' her home," he fabricated carefully. <br> "Please sah, I just wanna go home," the little girl said, her lower lip trembling.

> The officer softened and said, "Go ahead." He smiled and the girl said thank you. <br> Tom pulled her away and when they were far enough, he whopped. "Da goil's a natural!" he yelled, shaking Shark's shoulders.

> Shark scowled. "How d'ya know she ain't gonna tawk?" he asked.<br> "Look at her! She just lied to da bulls! She ain't gonna tawk!" The girl looked at him in amusement.

> "How d'ya know dat?" she smirked. Tom stopped dead in his tracks. Great. A pipsqueak wit an attitude. He glared at her, not too thrilled with her anymore. <br> "Because." He looked around, watching for any bulls who just might've been walking around and luckily, there were none. "So ya comin' or not?"

> The kid shrugged, not very expressive. Her short brown hair looked greasy, her bangs were in her eyes and she was covered in dirt. She looked like a runaway and you could see the defiance in her eyes. Tom started walking with Shark, watching her out of the corner of his eye. She followed not soon after and eventually all three reached their living quarters. The grimy apartment building didn't look like much from the outside but on the inside it looked like a mostly comfortable place. The girl looked around as Tom watched her cautiously. <br> "D'ya have a name kid?" he asked.

> She looked at him for what seemed an eternity, then nodded. "Jordan," she said with a touch of softness in her voice. Tom picked up on it and asked her gently, "Wheah's yer muddah and faddah?" <br> "They died," she replied nonchalantly. Tom nodded.

> "I'se Tom McNally. Ya can call me Tom er McNally, eiddah one. Dis heah is me gang, da Fourth Street Gang. Ya can stay wid us, but ya gotta do stuff fer da gang. Can ya do dat?" Jordan nodded.<br> They had started her out with simple things - breaking into houses and such. She was small enough to climb through the narrowest windows,

and she had a keen eye for valuables. As she grew older, the gang's respect for her grew, and soon enough, she had enough authority to set up meetings within the gang, with other local gangs and to schedule times for the gangs to commit their crimes. It wasn't long before she received her name. Connection, or Connect. She and McNally, as she called him, became very close, almost like sister and brother. Nights consisted of card games and talking. The gang in general seemed threatening, but to Connect, it seemed like family, which was why Tom was caught off guard when she made her surprising announcement.

><br> "Who said we'se gonna letcha out?" Shark sneered.

> Connect stared him down with her steely gaze before saying, "I just don' wanna do it no more."<br> Tom sighed. "But we needja." She glanced at him, her gaze softer now. It would be hard on her as well. Theirs was the only life she had really known.

> "No ya don't," she said. "Sides, I'd do anyt'in ta get out."<br> "Anythin'?" Shark asked suggestively. Both Tom and Connect shot him a dirty look. It was obvious that Shark liked her - he had been trying to get with her for some time now.

> Connect turned back to Tom. "I'se even willin' ta play pokah," she said with a wry grin. Tom's frown turned into a slight smile. Connect was horrible at poker. In all her years with them, she had won maybe five games. He realized she was really desperate if she was offering to play poker. <br> Connect knew that poker was not her forte. But she had a stange feeling she could win. Tom looked at her carefully before sighing. "Set 'em up." he said reluctantly.

> Connect shot him a grateful grin. At least, if she lost, she would know that she tried. Shark looked at Tom like he was crazy and yelled, "Are youse crazy?! Whaddya doin'?!"<br> Tom glanced at Shark and said, "Da goil asked. It ain't faih ta not listen ta her."

> Shark stared at Tom in shock and asked, "Since whend'ya play faih?"<br> Coldly Tom replied, "Since now."

> <br> The dim light in the basement provided ample light and Tom and Connect pulled chairs over to the table. A crowd gathered around the players, but Connect held the cards so only she herself could see. She didn't want to risk losing because someone behind her, like Shark, told Tom her cards.

> A furtive glance at her cards told her that she could win. All she needed was a card. The four of diamonds, to be precise. Then she'd have a royal flush. On the outside, she played it cool. But on the inside, she was bursting with excitement. All it took was one card. One card would be her ticket to freedom. She glanced up and saw Tom smiling smugly. For a second, she panicked. But she realized that because she had an ace, he couldn't beat her, unless she didn't get the four. <br> They picked cards and threw them out, acting as if it were nothing but a mere poker game. But it wasn't. It was a fight for her freedom, and they knew it. The tension in the room was so thick, you could slice it with a knife. Everyone held their breath as the last cards were dealt. Connect's confidence was beginning to waver. She still hadn't gotten the desired card and it was now or never.

> With a steady hand, she reached for the card. She prayed it was the four. Slowly, she turned it around. It was the four of diamonds. Inside, she was screaming, "I'm free!" On the outside, she remained calm and collected. Except for her eyes. The gold flecks in the green were dancing and as Tom looked at her, he knew. She had won. No longer was she to stay with the gang. She had a new life to begin. <br> He turned his cards over. "Full house."

> With a poker face, Connect revealed her cards. "Royal flush." A grin spread across her face and she looked like a little girl again.

She brushed a stringy strand of dark brown hair out of her eyes. Tom felt a pang of anger, remorse and happiness for her all at the same time. He stood up and offered his hand. <br> "Congratulations," he said. Connect took his hand and shook it. "Yer free," he said softly.

> "I know."<br> "Where ya gonna go?"

> "I don't know."<br> "Oh." Tom was silent for a minute. "I'll see ya around?"

> "Maybe."<br> Tom nodded. Connect gave him a look, only understood by him, before disappearing into a room to get her belongings, which were few. A minute later, she reappeared, holding a shirt with her belongings rolled up into it. Coolly, she said goodbye and walked out.

> Tom climbed out the window and sat on the fire escape not soon after. He shut the window, as not to be bothered, and the rest of the gang overcame their shock and returned to their activities, not mentioning a word about what just happened.<br> Out in the street, Connect pulled the lucky card out of her pocket. "Where to?" she asked the card. Then she realized how ridiculous she must look, in the middle of the street talking to a card, and chuckled. She put the card back into her pocket and spent the next several hours wandering around. Somehow, she ended up in front of the Upper East Side Newsgirls Lodginghouse. She looked it over thoughtfully and decided, "Now's a good time as any fer a new beginnin'."

> She walked in and saw a girl sitting on a chair. "Hey! I'se Crystal!" the girl said cheerfully.<br> Coolly, Connect responded. Fingering the card in her pocket, she said, "Hi. I'se Connect 4."

><br> The End!

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